

Herbs

Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*

What are the folklore uses of valerian?

Traditionally, valerian has been used to treat anxiety, colic, convulsions, gas, headaches, nervousness, pain, stress, and ulcers. It also has been used as a sleep aid.

What is valerian?

Valerian is a tall perennial. Its medicinal compound appears in the roots of the plant. The active compound is a volatile oil that has a disagreeable aroma.

What are the proposed medicinal uses of valerian?

Valerian is used medicinally as a tranquilizer. It helps some people with insomnia by allowing them to fall asleep faster and without the groggy, morning-after effects of prescription sleep-aids.

How effective is valerian?

Valerian has been studied to detect its active compounds, but researchers have been unable to identify them. Germany's Commission E, a counterpart to the Food and Drug Administration in the United States, has shown that it is an effective treatment for restlessness and for sleep disturbances resulting from nervous conditions. Valerian is classified as a minor tranquilizer.

Does valerian cause side effects?

No significant side effects from taking valerian have been identified, but it should not

be taken with other sedatives. There is a danger of oversedation, especially in older adults.

What are the recommended forms and dosages of valerian?

Valerian and its extracts can be purchased alone or in combination with other herbs. It can be taken as a tea, a tincture, a capsule, or an extract. Valerian tea may be taken a couple of times daily, prepared with one teaspoon of the dried roots. One-half to one teaspoon of tincture or extract is recommended.

Conclusion

Valerian is an herb with mild tranquilizing effects. It does not have morning-after effects, and may be safer than prescription sedatives. The active compounds of valerian continue to be studied.

Sources:

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